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ABSTRACT

The Yale-New Haven History Education Project began in Spring 1970 with the expressed goal of improving the quality and relevance of secondary school history courses in New Haven's public schools. Thirty Yale history professors worked with a comparable number of high school teachers and created approximately eighty "mini-courses" in United States History, replacing the required survey course. The summary report of the project lists the participants of the New Haven School System, ale History Department and other Yale faculty and outside visitors, the rationale for the project, the responsibilities for the teachers, coordinators and professors and an analysis of what the future will hold based cn reactions to the project thus far. Appendices list the titles cf the mini-courses offered at the three participating high schools. Thc teacher's guide, after repeating the staff responsibilities, introduces the inquiry approach and steps to developing a mini-course. A categorized list of skills and a skill and concept sequence are suggested. The specific techniques and activities of panel discussions or debates, mock trials, field trips, student taught classes and sound light shows are outlined. Appendices contain a teacher curriculum and a Yale seminar questionnaire.
(Author/KSM)

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YALE - NEW HAVEN

HISTORY EDUCATION PROJECT
(H.E.P.)

SUMMARY REPORT

1970-1973

SO 007 255

Prepared by:

Dr. Albert A. Seretny

History Co-ordinators
Yale - New Haven History Project

Department of Social Studies
New Haven Public Schools

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Participants in the Yale-New Haven History Education Project 1970-73.

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John Blassingame - (Black History)
John Blum - (20th Century)
David Brading - (Latin America)
Roger DesForges - (Asia)
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Participants in the Yale-New Haven History Education Project: 1970-72

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Richard Brown - (The Amherst Project)
John Culkin - (Center for Understanding Media)
David Holmes - (New Haven City Plan Department)
Hyman Kavett - (Richmond College)
Robert McDonald - (New Haven Colony Historical Society)
Eli Seidman - (SUNY, Stony Brook)

INTRODUCTION

The Yale-New Haven History Education Project began in the spring of 1970 with the expressed goal of improving the quality and relevance of secondary school history courses in New Haven's public schools. Some thirty Yale history professors have worked with a comparable number of high school teachers and have created approximately eighty "mini-courses" in United States History, which have involved over 1,300 students as of June, 1972. (See appendixes A and B.)

The U.S. Office of Education, (through the American Historical Association) and the National Humanities Faculty provided funds for the initial two years and had intended to carry the project into a third year before a failure of federal funding caused a retrenchment. Fortunately, the project will continue to be funded through generous grants from the New Haven Foundation, the Sachem Fund and Yale University. Initially it was conceived that the project should have a five-year life, with the New Haven Board of Education assuming financial responsibility by the fall of 1975, once the new courses in U.S. History, World Area Studies and the ninth-grade Urban Studies have been developed.

RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT

In June, 1970, a team of Yale people met with key Social Studies personnel from Lee, Hillhouse, Cross High Schools, and New Haven Public School officials and began the working relationship that was to become the Yale-New Haven History Education Project. The teachers felt strongly that the traditional survey approach to U.S. History was not "making it" with a vast majority of students and that an alternative approach was desirable. Discussons centered on a number of options for a new U.S. History program, and the participants finally settled on a system of quarterly "mini-courses" which would offer students a major role in course and teacher selection. During July, 1970, members of this group met daily to work out a new format in the following areas: general philosophy and goals, methods, curriculum development and administration.

This new program had some exciting selling points to the high school teachers: First, it is student-oriented and is geared toward meeting the needs and the desires of students in a particular classroom at a particular time and at any given academic level of achievement; Second, it is teacher-tailored because much of the initiative for the course is with the classroom teacher who can teach according to his own personal strengths and interests; Third, it offers the teacher and student alike the opportunity to develop their own curriculum, thereby making history more personal and interesting to both; Finally, it affords New Haven high school teachers opportunities for professional growth through affiliation with Yale University's staff and resources.

The teachers involved weren't kidding themselves; they knew that abandoning the textbook and embracing the ditto machine and audio-visual resources would mean a break with the security of past practices and roles. But with new ribbons in their typewriters and film catalogues by the dozens, as well as an abundant supply of midnight oil, the teachers instituted Mini-Courses first at Lee High School and subsequently at Cross and Hillhouse High Schools: and U.S. History would never be the same again!

Responsibilities

To co-ordinate these efforts, the teachers have had to assume extra responsibilities involving the courses in each school, and the necessary co-operation among the three schools and Yale.

All teachers involved in the U.S. History Project would be responsible for the following:

1. Submit to the U.S. History Co-ordinator a curriculum packet for each unit taught for the curriculum file. This packet would include four (4) copies of each ditto and a completed questionnaire. The curriculum questionnaire is found in Appendix A.

2. Attend one formal monthly in-service session to discuss common problems with other U.S. teachers.

3. Attend each session led by a Yale professor in an area covered by your mini-course.

4. Attend informal meetings with other U.S. teachers as needed during the school year.

5. Complete the form questionnaire prior to each Yale session. The Yale questionnaire is found in Appendix B.

Co-ordinator Responsibility:

Each U.S. History Project Co-ordinator (one per school) will be responsible for the following:

1. Ordering materials, e.g. books, films, filmstrips using HEP funds and keeping a record of spent and unspent monies. Also checking out books from Yale library for co-operating teachers.

2. Arranging monthly in-service meetings.

3. Scheduling visits by Yale professors to high schools.

4. Co-ordinating monthly Yale seminars including distributing questionnaires and outlines.

5. Keeping an up-dated file including each unit taught at the high schools and an inventory list of available materials. Each unit submitted to the co-ordinator will be distributed to other high schools.

6. Membership on HEP Review Board which includes Yale Co-ordinator.

7. Responsibility for on-going review and re-evaluation of the policies.

Yale Responsibilities:

1. Assuming overall co-ordination for the program.

2. Assisting in making Yale facilities available to the U.S. History teachers, e.g. obtaining library cards, stack passes, parking permits.

3. Arranging resource persons (Professors and Graduate Students) to meet with U.S. History people.

4. Assisting in all fund-raising activities for the U.S. History Project.

5. Membership on the HEP Review Board, including High School Co-ordinators.

Thus far, much has been said about teacher benefits derived from the Mini-Course Concept, and this is important. But, of course, the major concern of public high school education, or any education for that matter, is the student. At this point we should ask ourselves, "Why should the mini-courses be taught as an alternative to traditional survey U.S. History? Are they really making any difference?" We in the Project very emphatically say "yes" based on the following information about students enrolled in mini-courses:

1. For the first time in our history, many seniors who had completed their U.S. History requirement for graduation, requested permission to enroll (themselves) in a second year of the mini-courses. This means that these students take U.S. History for two years with a concentration in eight different areas, and is living proof that history can be interesting!
2. It is a statistical fact that at Lee High School (which is the only school at present to have had mini-courses for more than one year) there were far fewer students failing the year of mini-units as compared to the number failing the year of the survey U.S. History. We attribute fewer failures to a higher level of motivation, relevant course offerings, the opportunity to have new teachers and new learning environments each quarter, and new approaches in methods and teaching techniques.
3. Wilbur Cross High School is a case in point as to the

popularity of the mini-courses as compared to the survey approach. For the 1972-73 school year, the option of taking the survey was given next year's juniors, and there was not even enough interest in the survey to justify offering even one section.

Briefly, we feel the reasons why students have chosen the mini-units in such great numbers are the following:

1. The students prefer changing classes quarterly. This change of scenery affords them the opportunity not only to retain a teacher when they prefer, but also to have a variety of teachers during the year.
2. The multitude of offerings enables the student to develop his own particular interests more fully. It seems logical that a student will be motivated into performing more cognitive processes and at a higher level if the material is inherently interesting to him or her.
3. The selection process, e.g. that of making a conscious choice, has value in that it tends to force him to be more responsible for the work done since he is in the course of his own choosing.

Basically, the major thrust to the mini-course approach is to "turn kids on" to history. We seek to do this in several ways: First, to break down an unmanageable amount of material (United States history in its entirety) into manageable blocs; Second, to allow the student a certain freedom of choice and movement within

a required course of study (United States history is a requirement for graduation); and Third, to use methods and teaching techniques that place a premium on maximum student participation.

Within the framework of the above-mentioned material, it is hoped that the student will begin to recognize his personal role in education. After all, it is he who chose his course; it is he who chose his teacher; and it is he who should be held responsible for his choice and held accountable for his performance.

Within the inquiry method, which is the crux of the mini-course approach, the student should begin to participate not only as a critical thinker but also he should follow a direction of reason based upon his own interest and motivation.

The inquiry approach does not claim to be a panacea for today's urban educational woes. Rather, it is a method that will lead the student to a better understanding of himself as a mature adult and prepare him to contribute to society in his own personal style. Also, the student will develop basic skills, a practical background in clear and logical thinking, a more cogent method of response to written and visual material, and a more viable working relationship between him and his teacher.

THE FUTURE OF THE PROJECT

So much for beginnings and goals: what lies ahead for the Yale-New Haven History Education Project? Can this program continue its effectiveness and increase its impact on the educational process in New Haven and in other communities? Here are some hopeful signs?

1. Presently, within the discipline of history, the mini-courses are being worked into the ninth and tenth-grade programs, Urban Studies and World Area Studies, with a 1972 summer workshop for the World Area Studies teachers already completed. There is reason to expect that mini-courses can and will be offered at the middle school level as well. An additional selling point for the mini-course program is that teachers with expertise in any given area of history could offer to teach their particular mini-course at another school for a marking period, in a period of austerity, thus enlarging the scope of any one school's program, and giving students more selection.
2. In addition, the mini-course concept has implications for other academic disciplines as well. Plans for mini-units in English, Science and Mathematics are already in progress. Interdisciplinary course offerings using mini-courses and programs such as American Studies and humanities are being considered.
3. Through the History Education Project; academic historians at Yale have had the opportunity to redefine the values and

basic questions involved in historical inquiry. At the same time, they have been able to contribute to local schools in a realistic way what they know best: resources, special materials, and latest developments in their fields.

4. Through talks with local teachers and visits to the schools, the academic historians have shown that they can provide some help to inner-city schools and collaborate effectively with fellow historians at all levels. The co-operation between "town and gown" - almost unique in the country - will continue to demonstrate how urban education can take advantage of the best scholarship and improve classroom techniques. It promises to revitalize history at the high school and college level in the New Haven community and in the country at large. The relationship will expand as more and more historians become involved in the Project.

In conclusion, the Yale-New Haven History Education Project has met with remarkable success, through its mini-course approach, in teacher-student achievement and involvement. Both teachers and students have indicated strongly that they want and need such a program. The Project has to this point, been privately funded. We feel that we have come of age and now deserve the full moral and financial support of the New Haven Board of Education, local funds, private foundations, and future Title IX Grants. The implications of and possibilities for such a program are seemingly infinite, and it is our hope that the members of the Board share our enthusiasm for a program which rivals any similar program in any Connecticut community, urban or suburban, and the nation at-large. Through in-service sessions and presentations before teachers and Boards of

Education in other communities, we envision the New Haven Public Schools as a model for effective and innovative teaching for the entire nation to emulate.

APPENDIX A-1

U.S. History Mini-courses offered at Lee High School, 1970-71 - 1971-72

American Life Styles
Roaring 1920's
The Right to Strike
War and Peace
History of American Sports
History of Entertainment
American Painting
Black Protest Movements Since 1945
Popular Culture
American Autobiography
The Survival of the City
Harlem Renaissance
Women in America
Hard Times: The Story of the Depression
Voices in the Wilderness: Social Protest since 1900
The Cold War
Westward Expansion
American Materialism
Minorities in America
Slavery and the Civil War
Environmental Action
The Vietnam War
History of Connecticut
F.D. Roosevelt and the New Deal
The American Revolution
Alienation in America
Political Trials
The Constitution and the Supreme Court
American Presidents: Man Versus Myth
Red Man versus Pale Face: The American Indian
The Puritans as People
American Religion
World War and Peace: 1900-1950
Radical Movements in America
Black Families in White America
The World and the United States: 1945-1971
Great Crimes and Trials
Work and Play in America - Puritan Ethic
Reconstruction and the Black Experience
Soul
U.S. History Survey Course
S.A.T. Review of American History
Independent Study: Political Involvement, 1971
Reviewing and Renewing the Mini-courses

APPENDIX A-2

U.S. History Mini-courses offered at Hillhouse High School, 1971-72

Slavery and the Civil War
The American Indians
The Harlem Renaissance
Sports in America
Famous Trials in America
The Cold War
Violence in America
The Winning of the West
The 1920's
Hard Times: The Depression
Famous Personalities in American History
Fads and Fashions in American History
Crime in the 20th Century
The Age of Reform
American Geography
Women in America
The 1960's
Radical Politics: A Study in Frustration
America at Home: World Wars I and II
The Minority Experience
Social History of the 1930's

Law and the Individual
History of Black Social Thought

These two courses were created and taught by two practice teachers who worked under the supervision of Jack Gillette, H.E.P. coordinator at Hillhouse.

APPENDIX A-3

U.S. History Mini-courses offered at Cross High School, 1971-73.

The Constitution
The Cold War
World Wars I and II: Possible Alternatives to War
Violence in America
Big Brother is Eyeing You: U.S. Foreign Policy
Black American I
Black American II
When the Bread Ran Out: The 1930's, the Depression, and Franklin Roosevelt
Labor
The National Obsession: The McCarthy Era
Ms. The American Woman: Who is She?
Wild West: Cowboys, Cowgirls
History of Connecticut and New Haven
Roaring Twenties
Futurism
Losing Our Cool: The Civil War and its Aftermath
Sports
Isms
Industrial Revolution
American Foreign Policy
Minorities
The Indians